



Statistical Information as a Basis For Cooperative Planning

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STATISTICAL DATA CAN contribute significantly to three phases of cooperative planning. First, in the preliminary explorations, statistical measures provide objective descriptions of existing conditions that can be used in determining whether cooperative planning would be mutually beneficial to the participants. Statistical documentation of a need for cooperation certainly lends strong support to value judgments concerning its potential and should be useful in convincing appropriate individuals of the merits of a joint program. Second, in the actual planning process that follows the tentative agreement to work together, statistical data can help participants to identify the direction that the projected activity should take. The data can also aid them in the formulation of the precise objectives and organizational details of the cooperative program. Third, after the program produced by the cooperative planning becomes operational, statistical measures can provide one means of evaluating its effectiveness and impact. Such measures can be valuable in pinpointing weaknesses in the program and in ascertaining whether modifications need to be made in procedures or approach.

Historically, professional planners have recognized data collection as one of the initial phases in any planning process, and the growing quantitative character of planning activity has been noted by its practitioners. Many references to the uses of statistical data in planning are found in case studies; current guidelines for cooperative planning of recreation programs, health programs, and other services stress the necessity for appropriate and adequate data inputs into the planning and implementation of such programs.

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Compilations of library statistics have long been available to librarians. In his article, "History of the Measurement of Library Service," Thompson cites several reports published in the early nineteenth century and identifies Charles Coffin Jewett's *Notices of Public Libraries*, which appeared in 1851 as an appendix to the fourth annual report of the Smithsonian Institution, as the "first significant compilation of statistical records of American libraries published in this country."¹

Publications treating library cooperation, library planning, and library statistics have not, however, emphasized the use of statistical measures. Articles and reports treating library statistics deal primarily with the problems of definition and standardization of statistical measures. The literature concerning library cooperation stresses pro and con views of its desirability and descriptions of specific cooperative activities, and the published material dealing with library planning discusses nonstatistical approaches. In fact, in her guidelines for the planning of academic library consortia, Patrick merely suggests that: "as a result of each exploratory meeting, there may be action items for the various participants to work on in their home environments. For example, it may be desirable to have a compilation of basic library statistics in a common format for each library involved."² Although his identification of the kinds of measures needed for statewide planning was not precise, Beasley noted positively, that "data are necessary in order to devise a rational plan of service for the immediate future."³

Generally, as Purdy observed, librarians have "been slow to exploit measurement as a professional tool."⁴ The available evidence suggests that librarians use statistical data less often in cooperative planning—and even in administrative planning—than do personnel of other educational and service agencies. Librarians have used statistical measures most often in fiscal planning or, more specifically, in budget preparation and justification. Comparative data on salaries, on the size of collections, on the size and composition of the library staffs, and on per capita expenditures have guided preparation of library budgets and have been highlighted in the actual budget requests. Use of statistical measures by librarians in program planning appears to have occurred infrequently.

Basic differences in the structure of cooperation partially explain the lack of stress accorded statistical data in the joint planning of library agencies. In his review of interlibrary cooperation, Blackburn notes that library cooperation "is set in a tradition in which vague and casual relationships have been the norm."⁵ Many cooperative library

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programs have been developed not on the basis of factual and numerical data but on the basis of personalities—librarians who believed strongly in the potential of cooperation, who worked out the details of establishment, and who guided the joint program through any initial difficulties to a healthy and stable operation. With more complex programs of cooperation, preliminary discussions have usually resulted in specific studies of the feasibility of establishing the projected activity. Statistical data have, of course, been utilized in these studies, but primarily in connection with finances.

The restricted use librarians have made of statistical data reflects, to some extent, their lack of confidence in the reliability and validity of these measures. In spite of their inadequacies, many series of data are available to librarians. When used with full awareness of their weaknesses, these data can provide as valuable an input into the planning process as is offered by fallible human judgments.

Statistical measures needed by librarians in most cooperative planning can be grouped into two distinct categories. The first is composed of library data—measure of library resources, operations and services. The second category includes measures of the population to be served and, if possible, measures of the factors affecting the lives of that population.

Library statistics are collected on a regular basis by several types of agencies and organizations. In terms of comprehensiveness and sophistication of activity, the Library Surveys Branch of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) is the most important of these agencies. Established in 1965, NCES has refined and expanded the activities of the U.S. Office of Education in relation to library statistics. With the support of the American Library Association (ALA) and other agencies, NCES has taken the leadership in planning a national library statistics system. The system is based on a working partnership between NCES and the individual state library agencies. Plans include a definite time schedule so that surveys of the different types of libraries will be conducted on a rotating basis. Planning for this national system—now officially designated Library General Information Survey (LIBGIS)—was begun in 1966. In addition to the many meetings of the individuals directly concerned with the project, a series of conferences has been held at both the regional and national levels in order to keep librarians informed about the program and to secure additional inputs into the planning of the system.⁶ The initial collection of data under the LIBGIS program was begun early in 1975 with the distribution of survey forms to public and school libraries.

Research conducted in relation to the development of LIBGIS has already produced reports that will be valuable to persons exploring problems associated with library statistics.⁷ Equally important, in connection with the implementation of LIBGIS, is a new edition⁸ of the 1966 *Library Statistics*⁹ scheduled for publication in 1975 by the U.S. Government Printing Office. NCES has continued its regular program of data collection during the years of planning for LIBGIS. Some of the surveys it has published are cited below.

Federal agencies other than NCES, state agencies, associations, some individual libraries, and commercial publishers collect and publish library statistics. For example, at the federal level the Bureau of the Census has regularly included library data in a number of its reports. Within the individual states, the state library agencies are usually the most active of the organizations that engage in the collection of library measures, and in some states the report compiled by the state library agency includes data on academic, special and institutional libraries. State departments of education normally collect, but do not publish, library statistics. Other units of state government may also gather library data. Statistical activities of library associations vary considerably. The ALA, once the major collector and publisher of library statistics, has virtually withdrawn from such activity on a regular basis and instead supports the statistical work of others. However, some smaller associations such as the American Association of Law Libraries have expanded their collection and publication of statistics. The few libraries that prepare statistical compilations have assumed the responsibility because of their own interest in having the data for budgetary planning. These libraries distribute the compilations without any analysis. Of the commercial firms that collect library statistics, R.R. Bowker has the most extensive program.

The following sections contain identifications of some of the series of statistical data published by the various types of agencies. Only titles that are currently being issued are included, and the most recent issue examined is cited. Where it could be supplied without undue difficulty, some indication is given of the number of years each series has been produced. Thompson traced the origin of some of the older series,¹⁰ but it was not possible to bring his work up to date here.

ACADEMIC LIBRARY STATISTICS

More sources of statistical measures exist for academic than for other types of libraries. The most satisfactory of these series is the report, *Library Statistics of Colleges and Universities*,¹¹ produced by NCES. In its

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most recent editions the report has consisted of three parts; parts A and B provide basic statistics for each library, and part C presents an analysis of the basic measures. Unfortunately, similar analyses are not, at the time of this writing, available for data describing other types of libraries.

Two associations and one library compile statistics for academic libraries. Beginning with 1962-63 data, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has published *Academic Library Statistics*¹² annually. Although its coverage is now restricted to the university libraries belonging to ARL, *Academic Library Statistics* continues the series, published for many years by the Princeton University Library. Seventeen categories of data are presented in the ARL report. Since the 1920s, Louisiana State University Library has collected and published "Statistics of Southern College and University Libraries."¹³ The 1973 report contained ten measures and covered fifty libraries. The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries produces an annual statistical survey which currently provides data on holdings, expenditures, enrollment, salary scales, and staff for the twenty-nine member libraries.¹⁴ The first issue contained measures for 1964-65.

The Council on Library Resources produces a very different kind of statistical report—a series of surveys of the economic status of academic library personnel.¹⁵ Its report, based on data collected by the American Association of University Professors, presents a comparison of salaries received by librarians with those of faculty members as well as comparisons of the compensations of librarians by type of position.

PUBLIC LIBRARY STATISTICS

Measures of public library service are much more difficult to secure than are those for academic libraries. The public library statistics published by NCES and its predecessors have not appeared with the regularity of those for academic libraries. The most recent report was issued in 1970 and contains 1968 data.¹⁶ It covers libraries serving populations of 25,000 or more and, consequently, does not attempt the comprehensive coverage provided by *Library Statistics of Colleges and Universities*.

Because of their inclusiveness, the most important source of statistical data on public libraries continues to be the reports produced by the individual state library agencies. Krikelas observed that in the state library agencies he studied, the statistical activity was "basically one of editing-for-publication the reports of the public libraries in that state, without any effort to analyze or synthesize the reports."¹⁷

However, the state reports are designed to cover all public libraries, and that characteristic alone makes them a significant series.

Three individual libraries collect and distribute data about public libraries—data which usually can be utilized in budgetary planning and justification. Two of the libraries—those at Fort Wayne and Memphis—initiated their compilations after the ALA ceased publication of statistical measures for public libraries. The report prepared by the Fort Wayne library covers libraries serving populations of 100,000 or more and is issued biennially.¹⁸ It contains ten categories of information for each library and includes the salaries of the director and the assistant director and the length of time the incumbents have held their positions. The Memphis compilation covers southern public libraries that have budgets of \$100,000 or more.¹⁹ The report provides eleven measures, mostly concerning salaries, for each of the libraries (86 in the 1973 report). The Enoch Pratt Free Library publishes a very detailed chart which gives professional and nonprofessional salary data for large public libraries.²⁰ Detailed financial data as well as information on holdings are supplied for the twenty-three libraries included in the 1972 report.

The "Indices of American Public Library Statistics," initially developed by Herbert Goldhor and published in the *A.L.A. Bulletin*, are now published in *Illinois Libraries*.²¹ The indices provide a measurement of library use similar to the indices measuring the cost of living.

SCHOOL LIBRARY STATISTICS

Possibly because of the number of libraries involved, published sources of current statistical data on school library/media centers are not presently available, and only two sources contain some comparatively recent data on isolated aspects of school library/media services. NCES's report on local school systems gives the number of librarians and library aides in each of the school systems in 1970.²² In addition, the annual reports on activities and expenditures funded under Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act regularly include approximately eight tables of statistical data.²³ The data concern Title II staffs and the expenditure of Title II funds. State totals—not figures for local systems—are given in every case.

The 1962 U.S. Office of Education survey remains the most recently published source of detailed data on school libraries.²⁴ As indicated previously, school library/media centers are covered in the first survey

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under the LIBGIS program, so it is hoped that current data will soon become available.

State departments of education routinely require school librarians to submit annual reports covering the resources, staffs and activities of the library/media centers. These reports are normally machine processed, but tabulated data are not usually published. In fact, in many states, the data seem to become lost somewhere in the mysterious realm of the computers, and the librarians who need the data are unsuccessful in their attempts to gain access to them.

SPECIAL LIBRARY STATISTICS

Fewer comprehensive sources of current measures of the resources and services of special libraries are available than is the case for academic and public libraries. Because company policy forbids the release of such information, data on finances and staff are not reported for many special libraries. Both the *American Library Directory*²⁵ and the *Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers*²⁶ provide some measures for the special libraries they include.

The Special Libraries Association collects, analyzes and publishes data on the salaries received by its members. The data are reported by salary range and geographically by census region. Currently, the salary surveys are conducted triennially.²⁷

More detailed statistical compilations are available for specific types of special libraries. Beginning with 1969, the *Law Library Journal* has published the results of annual surveys of individual law school libraries.²⁸ Statistical surveys of several other types of law libraries have been conducted and reported in the same journal since 1969.²⁹ It is currently planned to carry out these surveys regularly in the future. Starting with the 1965 proceedings, the American Theological Library Association has included statistical measures of individual libraries in the reports of its annual conferences. Fifteen different measures are provided for the libraries covered.³⁰ The American Medical Association and the Medical Library Association cooperated in a four-year research and development project to plan and implement a program for regular collection of statistics on health science libraries.³¹

STATE LIBRARY AGENCIES AND FEDERAL LIBRARIES

Aside from their own published reports, few sources of current data presently exist for either the state library agencies or for libraries maintained by the federal government. Special surveys have been

conducted for both categories, but these have been nonrecurring programs. Once the LIBGIS program becomes fully operational, these libraries will be surveyed on a regular basis.

There are currently two sources of data about state library agencies that should be identified, however. *The Book of the States*³² provides some financial measures for the agencies, and the State Library of Ohio compiles salary data for them.³³

LIBRARY EDUCATION STATISTICS

Current sources of statistics on library education have been described and evaluated recently in the *Journal of Education for Librarianship*.³⁴ Of the seventeen sources identified, four should be cited here. The *North American Library Education Directory and Statistics, 1971-1973* contains data on the various graduate programs, undergraduate programs, and library technical assistants programs.³⁵ Chapters treating the different types of programs provide detailed analyses of the data. The directory is the most comprehensive of the statistical sources dealing with library education.

ALA's Committee on Accreditation compiles data from the annual reports submitted by the schools accredited by ALA.³⁶ The compilation includes data on faculty, students and finance.

Two sources cover only limited aspects of library education. Data on placement of the graduates of accredited library schools and on the salaries they received have been published annually in *Library Journal* since 1952.³⁷ Data on the salaries of members of the faculties of accredited library schools were first collected for the 1971-72 academic year and have been collected annually since that time. The data were published in the *Journal of Education for Librarianship* in 1974³⁸ and future compilations will continue to appear in that journal.

STATISTICS ON LIBRARY BUILDINGS

Three series provide data on new library construction and on buildings which have been enlarged and remodeled. All three series are published in the architectural issue of *Library Journal*. The series dealing with public library construction was begun with data for fiscal year 1969,³⁹ and the academic library series began with 1967 data.⁴⁰ Both of these series have been published annually. A series on community colleges was initiated in 1971 with a report covering construction in 1965-71.⁴¹ Each of the three series gives a number of specific measures of cost and size for the individual construction

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projects listed. The commentaries which introduce the listings of the projects include a few comparative statistics.

STATISTICS ON LIBRARY MATERIALS

Measures of volume of book production and book prices are reported regularly in *Publishers Weekly*, which also publishes data from the annual survey of the Association of American Publishers.⁴² The *Bowker Annual* reprints some of these data and presents some measures that are not available elsewhere.⁴³ Price indexes and average prices are given for hardcover trade/technical books, paperbacks and serials.

The *Hope Reports* contain data on volume of production and costs of nonprint media.⁴⁴ The annual series now includes three volumes: the first—*AV-USA*—covers production and costs; the second—*Education & Media*—deals with the use of nonprint media; the theme of the final volume varies from year to year. In addition to the annual series, a quarterly report series is produced. Tom Hope conducts his own surveys to secure the data for these various series.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF LIBRARY STATISTICS

Additional statistical compilations can be located most easily by consulting the various volumes of the *Bowker Annual* and the *Digest of Educational Statistics*.⁴⁵ Both of these publications contain statistics, and the original sources of the statistics, which are always identified, frequently contain additional data. In addition, the *Bowker Annual* usually contains a bibliography of statistical publications, and its articles often cite surveys in progress or recently completed. For older data, Rather and Cohen's bibliography⁴⁶ and the list in Palmer's volume⁴⁷ are useful. *Library Literature*, of course, covers statistical sources, but the publications cited above provide quicker identification.

SURVEYS

Many early surveys and special reports contain statistical data that are valuable from a historical standpoint. Four are mentioned here as illustrations, and a current survey is given more extended treatment. The monumental 1876 report, *Public Libraries in the United States*, covers all types of libraries and provides more numerical details than can be found in most current surveys.⁴⁸ In the report of the 1926 survey conducted by the ALA, narrative description is emphasized, but many statistical measures are included.⁴⁹ The first of the library surveys of a

region took place in the Southeast during 1946-47. The report of that survey provides measures of library conditions in the nine-state region just prior to a period of major growth and change.⁵⁰ Almost a decade later, a survey of library service and facilities was conducted in the Pacific Northwest. Statistical data are given much less often in the report of that regional survey.⁵¹

Because it demonstrates cooperation in the collection of data to be used by librarians in identifying areas in which cooperation is needed and is likely to be productive, the Southeastern States Cooperative Library Survey, now in progress, merits an extended description here. The Southeastern Library Association (SELA) joined the state library agencies, the state library associations, and the Tennessee Valley Authority in sponsoring and funding the survey. Begun in 1972 as a two-year project, the schedule has been extended and the final report will not be available before the end of 1975. A report containing the more than 500 tables produced from the data collected was released in April 1975.⁵²

Patterned after the 1946-47 survey mentioned above, the 1972-74 survey covers virtually all types of libraries located in the nine member states of the SELA in 1972. Fifteen different questionnaires were prepared to collect data for the survey. Each of the questionnaires was designed to obtain data about the geographical area served by the library, the library's finances, its staff, its collections, the types of service it offers, the categories of people it serves, its physical plant, and in some cases, its use of computers. The questionnaire completed by professional employees of libraries gave them an opportunity to rate obstacles to library development and to rank possibilities for cooperation.

Work already completed on the survey supports some conclusions about conditions conducive to cooperation, and provides the basis for the illustration of possible cooperative programs. Survey data show that certain problems affect one type of library particularly; for example, school libraries need clerical personnel badly and these libraries could well begin a campaign to strengthen standards concerning staff. The returns indicate that there are problems which concern all types of libraries; there is a need for greater attention to staff development and for more opportunities for continuing education, for example, and certainly a cooperative program could be developed here. Survey tabulations reveal that many academic, public and school libraries are informally providing some service to individuals other than those they are immediately responsible for

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serving. This suggests that in some localities, at least, a willingness exists to explore cooperative methods for making existing resources available to any person in the area. Review of the survey returns indicates that many individual libraries have more in common with libraries of other types than with their own type. Specifically, some community college libraries have more in common with high school libraries than with other college libraries. The same relationship exists between some public and some academic libraries, suggesting that libraries of different types share mutual concerns and should be able to work cooperatively. In essence, the survey data confirm the existence of many problems that librarians could effectively approach on a cooperative basis, and that cooperation need not be restricted to libraries of one type.

The 1972-74 survey itself adds to the evidence supporting the practicality of cooperation. The survey work plan called for the actual involvement of the sponsoring agencies and of individual librarians in virtually every phase of activity, and the level of cooperation essential to the completion of the survey has been maintained. As work on the survey draws to a close, the survey director, at least, is convinced that the project has been worthwhile. The real test of its worth, of course, will be found in the use that librarians make of it and in the extent to which it stimulates greater cooperation among librarians.

SOURCES OF NONLIBRARY STATISTICS

Many sources of nonlibrary data are of potential value to the librarian in both budgetary and program planning. Due to space limitations, it is impossible to do more than identify some of the agencies that produce the data and mention some publications as illustrations.

At the federal level, the publications of the Bureau of the Census are a most important source of data for the planning of programs by many agencies, including libraries. The decennial censuses provide official counts of the U.S. population and data on detailed social and economic characteristics of that population. The availability of decennial census data on magnetic tapes has increased their value for program planning.

Publications of state agencies also contain useful data series. The agencies most likely to produce such series are the health, planning and finance or revenue agencies. The first two sometimes prepare population estimates and forecasts, and the third usually publishes data on property values and various types of tax collections. Also

operating at the state level, the university bureaus of business and economic research frequently prepare series on personal income and on population estimates and forecasts.

At the substate level, regional councils and commissions routinely conduct significant demographic and economic analyses, and most of them have compiled the data series needed for the planning of programs in their areas. These agencies are normally eager to support library planning.

Of the commercially produced publications, the "Survey of Buying Power"⁵³ and *Editor & Publisher Market Guide*⁵⁴ are used most often in program planning. They each contain population and income estimates for counties and are issued annually.

The *Statistical Abstract* continues to be the most helpful source in identifying nonlibrary data.⁵⁵ Although they were compiled several years ago, two guides to sources of local data will also be useful to the librarian who lacks familiarity with statistical compilations.⁵⁶

All planning by librarians begins with measures of their own operations; to those measures they add, when appropriate, comparative data concerning other libraries. In order to plan most effectively, librarians need data on the costs of the specific activities that occur within the library. Presently, few librarians prepare such information, and few of the published series of data contain such measures.

Contrary to the opinions of many nonlibrary administrators, library cooperation does not necessarily mean financial savings for the participants. In fact, it can increase operating costs. Programs of library cooperation are desirable and justified when they expand the resources and increase the effectiveness of the services available to users. In order to determine whether cooperation will achieve these objectives, librarians need more than inventory measures.

For effective use in administrative planning, data must provide measures of current conditions. Members of legislative bodies, officials of city and county governments, and academic administrators are not convinced by library budget requests and program justifications based on measures of conditions that existed several years ago. Because of the time lag in their appearance, many of the series of library statistics possess only limited value for library administrators. Instead of supporting administrative decision-making, the series are useful primarily in relation to research.

There are encouraging signs that library planning at all levels is

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moving toward more effective use of data. Both external and internal factors are moving librarians in this direction. As state and local governments adopt zero-based and other forms of budgeting, publicly supported libraries will find it necessary to revise their processes of budget preparation and justification and to use different kinds of data. As library cooperation becomes more formal, librarians will become more interested in cost/benefit analysis. In addition, evidence of growing interest by librarians in better measures of library operations has been demonstrated in the work underway on measurement and evaluation of library service. Furthermore, the prospects for better series of data becoming available to librarians are bright indeed. The National Commission on Librarians and Information Science is emphasizing the need for better data, and its work provides significant support for statistical programs. NCES, through LIBGIS, should be able to achieve a significant improvement in the quality of data published at the state and national levels and, therefore, in the data that are easily available to practicing librarians.

Reliable and valid data can contribute significantly to the planning and implementation of programs of library cooperation. Data will always be merely a tool, however. The key to the success of library cooperation lies in the participants themselves—in the support they provide, and in their determination to make the program succeed.

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